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ABSTRACT

The Standard for the Ethical Practice of Web Counseling indicates that Web counselors should review pertinent legal and ethical codes for possible violations emanating from online counseling. Doing so is a difficult task considering the many legal and ethical codes and the difficulty of obtaining codes from state counselor licensure boards or from professional counseling membership organizations. A survey was sent to all U.S. counselor licensure boards seeking current information about the extent to which they are regulating the practice of telephone and Web counseling. Currently, five states do not have counselor licensure boards. Thirty-four state counselor licensure boards and one registry responded that they have no Web counseling regulations at this time. Only two boards (Arkansas and Texas) responded that they have some form of Web counseling regulations. A reason most states suggested for not regulating at this point is that they have not received any complaints concerning the practicing of telephone counseling or Web counseling. As state counselor licensure boards attempt to address their responsibilities both to the public and the profession, providing both potential clients and counselors with hard copy or hot links to sites, which define ethical behavior, will be a valuable service. (JDM)

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TELEPHONE AND CYBERCOUNSELING REGULATION: LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

by

John W. Bloom and James P. Sampson, Jr.

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The Standards for the Ethical Practice of WebCounseling indicate that web counselors shall "review pertinent legal and ethical codes for possible violations emanating from the practice of webcounseling and supervision." (NBCC, 1998). To date, doing so has been difficult at best considering the many legal and ethical codes that could possibly address web counseling regulatory matters and the difficulty of obtaining said codes from state counselor licensure boards or from professional counseling membership organizations.

Legal codes to be examined would include the forty-five state counselor licensure board statutes as well as the Guam and District of Columbia statutes, the California Professional Counselor Registry rules and might possibly include codes for other countries if webcounseling was going to be practiced with clients outside the United States. Ethical codes that address webcounseling continue to grow in number and rarely are found in one location but are available at http://www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/standards.html (Sampson, 2000).

This manuscript will present the results of a survey of state counselor licensure boards regulations pertaining to webcounseling. It will also review several counseling codes of ethics identifying those standards applicable to counselors using computer technology to augment their professional practice.

Survey Methodology

In October of 2000, a survey was sent to all US counselor licensure boards seeking current information about the extent to which they are or are not regulating the practice of telephone and webcounseling.

The Survey

Date: October 9, 2000
To: State Counselor Licensure Board Member or Administrator
From: John W. Bloom and James P. Sampson, Jr.
Re: Telephone Counseling and Cyber Counseling Survey

For several years groups such as the American Counseling Association, the National Board for Certified Counselors, and the American Association of State Counseling Boards have expressed the need to have information regarding state counselor licensure board policies that address telephone and cybercounseling issues. The purpose of this survey is to collect such information and disseminate it back to state counselor licensure boards at the 2001 AASCB Conference in Tampa and via posting at the Cybercounseling web site, http://cybercounsel.uncg.edu .

Does your state counselor licensure board have any statutory language, rules, regulations, ethical considerations, or official policies that address the practice of telephone counseling or cyber counseling in your state…

YES NO by in-state practitioners credentialed by your board
If so, can you give us specific language?

YES NO by in-state practitioners not credentialed by your board
If so, can you give us specific language?

YES NO by credentialed out-of-state practitioners
If so, can you give us specific language?

YES NO by non-credentialed out-of-state practitioners
If so, can you give us specific language?

YES NO If the answer to any of these is "YES", have you had any complaints or violations and, if "Yes", can you give us any information about these situations.

YES NO Is there any other relevant information you feel we should know about?

The Results

	By in-state practitioners credentialed by your board	By in-state practitioners not credentialed by your board	By credentialed out-of-state practitioners	By non-credentialed out-of-state practitioners	If the answer to any of these is "Yes", have you had any complaints or violations and, if "Yes", can you give us any information about these situations	Is there any other relevant information you feel we should know about?
Alabama	No	No	No	No	No	No
Alaska	No	No	No	No	No	No
Arizona	No	No	No	No	No	No
Arkansas	Yes Telephone counseling is not allowed under any AR state license.	No	No	No	No	No
California	No counselor licensure law	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
California Professional Counselor Registry	No	No	No	No	No	No – the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice are used for the Registry's standard.
Colorado	No	No	No	No	No	No
Connecticut	No	No	No	No	No	No We haven't addressed this issue yet.
Delaware	No	No	No	No	No	No
District of Columbia						
Florida	No	No	No	No	No	No
Georgia	No	No	No	No	No	No
Guam						
Hawaii	No licensure law	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Idaho	No	No	No	No	No	No
Illinois	No	No	No	No	No	No
Indiana	No	No	No	No	No	No
Iowa	No	No	No	No	No	No
Kansas						
Kentucky						
Louisiana	No	No	No	No	No	No We refer to the ACA Code of Ethics which we have adopted and the WebCounseling Guidelines from NBCC/ACA
Maine	No	No	No	No	No	No
Maryland	No	No	No	No	No	No
Massachu-	No	No	No	No	No	No

setts						
Michigan	No	No	No	No	No	No
Minnesota	No licensure law	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi						
Missouri	No	No	No	No	No	No
Montana						
Nebraska						
Nevada	No licensure law	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Hampshire	No	No	No	No	No	No
New Jersey	No	No	No	No	No	No
New Mexico	No	No	No	No	No	No
New York	No licensure law	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Carolina						
North Dakota	No	No	No	No	No	No – The Board has appointed some members to research this issue.
Ohio						
Oklahoma	No	No	No	No	No	No
Oregon	No	No	No	No	No	No
Pennsyl-vania						
Rhode Island	No	No	No	No	No	No
South Carolina	No	No	No	No	No	No An ad hoc committee is studying the feasibility of inaugurating these counseling modalities in SC and we are most grateful to have them.
South Dakota	No	No	No	No	No	No The SD Board will be visiting this issue at a meeting this month and then will keep proactive as possible
Tennessee	No	No	No	No	No	No
Texas	Yes – see note	No	No	No	No	No
Utah	No	No	No	No	No	No Our statute and rules are available for review at www.commerce.state.ut.us/dopl/dopl1.htm

Vermont	No	No	No	No	No	No
Virginia	No	No	No	No	No	No
Washington						
West Virginia	No	No	No	No	No	No The issue is on our 11/6/00 board meeting agenda for discussion
Wisconsin	No	No	No	No	No	No
Wyoming	No	No	No	No	No	No

There were 48 possible respondents including 45 state counselor licensure boards as well as the Guam board, the District of Columbia board, and the California Professional Counselor Registry. Currently five states have no counselor licensure board (California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Nevada, and New York). Thirty-four state counselor licensure boards and the California Professional Counselor Registry responded that they have no webcounseling regulations at this time. Only two boards (Arkansas and Texas) responded that they had some form of web counseling regulation. Eleven boards did not respond (Guam, District of Columbia, KS, KY, MS, MT, NE, NC, OH, PA, WA). The response rate to this survey was 77% (37/48 = 77%).

Notes from the Respondents

ALASKA - The Alaska Board of Professional Counselors does not address in its statutes or regulations telephone or cybercounseling.

A person who is not licensed under AS 08.29.1000 (unlicensed use of title prohibited) may not profess to be a licensed professional counselor or a licensed counselor; or make use of the title, words, letters, or abbreviations that may be reasonably confused with the title of "licensed professional counselor" or "licensed counselor".

The board, under regulations 12 AAC 62.900 has a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (American Counseling Association, 1997) which is adopted by reference as the code of ethics for professional counselors in the state. A professional counselor licensed in the state must adhere to the code of ethics. (e-mail, Wanda Fleming, AK Licensing Examiner Board of Professional Counselors, October 24, 2000)

ARKANSAS - No, the Arkansas Counselors Association is recommending some legal changes and the board is studying the issue. Board policy is "Telephone counseling is not allowed under any (Arkansas) state license". This policy is being reviewed.

CALIFORNIA – Recently the California Marriage, Family and Child Counselor legislation was changed to a Marriage and Family Therapist statute, so California no longer has counselor licensure but continues to maintain a voluntary counselor registry. California, however, has always been at the forefront of telemedicine and an excellent website to visit for further information is Dr. Marlene Mahue's http://cybertowers.com. There is also a Telehealth Professionals Mail List at http://www.shpm.com/ppc/telehealth1.html.

FLORIDA - The State of Florida has sought to pass a telemedicine bill that was soon expanded to include all professions as most all professions have shown interest in practice over the Internet. Another compromise version of the telehealth bill is expected to be introduced in the next legislative session and expected to pass . (10/24/00 email from Sue Foster, Board Director).

The Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy, and Mental Health Counseling is part of the Department of Health's Division of Medical Quality Assurance. In 1999 the Florida legislature created a Department of Health Task Force on Telehealth to examine issues related to the utilization of telecommunication technology, the regulation of telehealth practice, and its impact on access

and quality of healthcare. The task force found that Floridians must be afforded assurances that health care delivered through telecommunications provides comparable safeguards and oversight as Florida's traditional, however a barrier to full utilization may include reimbursement methodology. The task force sought, unsuccessfully, to pass legislation stated that the delivery of all healthcare services to Floridians, including services delivered through telecommunications, should be regulated through the Florida licensure of healthcare practitioners to protect the public health and safety and hold the practitioners accountable for quality health care. Further, a Florida telehealth license should be established for all regulated healthcare professions. The requirements for a telehealth license should be identical to those requirements for full licensure in Florida for the corresponding profession, including requirements such as profiling, credentialing, informed consent, financial responsibility and malpractice insurance.

(FLORIDA) TELEHEALTH PROPOSAL
SUMMARY OF MEETING
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENATE STAFF
MARCH 30, 2000

The following summarizes major provisions of an alternative proposal to regulate telehealth practitioners, as an option to SB 2492's requirement for full licensure.

REGISTRATION OF TELEHEALTH PRACTITIONERS:

WHO -

- any practitioner who does not have a Florida license and provides health care services through telecommunications to a person in Florida
- registration required for both direct services to patients and consultation to Florida licensed practitioners…no exemption for consultation

EXEMPTION –

- practitioners licensed in another state or jurisdiction who provide health care services ONLY to their established patients who are temporarily visiting Florida and ONLY for chronic conditions (same as current Florida pharmacy law)
- Florida licensees do not have to have an additional telehealth registration
- Does not apply to non-resident pharmacies registered under s. 465.0156 or the employees thereof
- No restrictions or prohibitions on consumer rights to contact or communicate with practitioners

WHAT –

- telehealth services is defined as health care services provided from a practitioner in a location other than Florida to a patient located in Florida (except as exempted) through telecommunication
- health care services is defined as the diagnosis, treatment, operation, prescription, or other services for a human disease, pain, deformity, or other physical or mental condition, as provided in Florida's health care practice acts
- judgement about whether an internet website or any other provision of health information requires registration is dependent upon whether the activity being provided falls under Florida's practice acts
- restricted to telecommunications from a location other than Florida; if a practitioner comes to Florida to provide services, must have a Florida license

REGISTRATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS -

- For initial registration must have a valid and unencumbered license in another state or recognized jurisdiction
- Biennium renewal of registration, must have a valid and unencumbered license in another state or jurisdiction, under that state or jurisdiction's license renewal provisions
- Fee would be actual cost, maximum $200 registration fee, and $200 renewal fee
- Simple application
- Documentation of clear and active licensure from other state or jurisdiction

- Administered by Department of Health

ENFORCEMENT -

- Failure to register would result in a cease and desist letter with opportunity to register without further penalty
- Failure to register after cease and desist letter, would be referred for investigation and prosecution of unauthorized activity under current law
- Consumer complaints would be investigated under current law
- Registrants must comply with Florida's practice act and violations of Florida's practice act would result in suspension or revocation of registration.
- No other administrative penalties
- The bill would affirmatively state that Florida's "Long Arm Statute" (s. 48.193, F.S.) applies to the provision of telehealth services
- Florida licensees would be subject to discipline for knowingly consulting with or otherwise utilizing telehealth services provided by a person who does not hold a valid Florida Telehealth Registration or is otherwise exempt
- Enforcement for registrants would be administered by the Department of Health

CONSUMER INFORMATION -

- Department must maintain a website for consumers to find out if a practitioner has a Florida license or a telehealth registration
- Advertisements by telehealth registrants, including websites, must include registration number and include a disclaimer to consumers about Florida's registration law and how to contact the Department

OTHER PROVISIONS -

- Intent language about state's interest in protecting the public
- Telehealth registrant must protect confidentiality of electronic medical records as required by Florida law
- Statement that this law does not limit Florida's Health Care Board or Department of Health from regulating Florida licensees regardless of the location of the patient
- Rulemaking authority for the Department to implement

MAINE - The Board of Counseling Professional Licensure does not, at this time, have statutes or rules intended to specifically address the rendering of professional services via telephonic or electronic means. Counseling professionals are required to be licensed in Maine in order to render therapeutic services to Maine residents, however. The rules pertinent to the practice of counseling are available as a link from our website at http://www.state.me.us/pfr/olr/index.htm or directly at http://www.state.me.us/sos/cec/rcn/apa/02/chaps02.htm under 02-514.

OREGON – Oregon does not have any statutory language, rules, regulations, specific ethical guidelines, or official policies that address the practice of telephone counseling or cybercounseling.

TEXAS - Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors

681.32 General Ethical Requirements

(g) A licensee shall provide counseling treatment intervention only in the context of a professional relationship. Telepractice (interactive long distance counseling delivery, where the client resides in one location and the counselor in another) may be used as part of the therapeutic counseling process. Counselors engaging in Telepracticing must adhere to each provision of this chapter.

UTAH – has not dealt with the issue of telephone or cyber counseling…I (Ron Bingham) assume that this issue will require our attention soon.

Discussion

With few exceptions, state counselor licensure boards are not involved in the regulation of telephone or web counseling. Reasons for this may include the newness of particularly web counseling and the relative newness of some of the state boards themselves. Perhaps a stronger reason not to regulate is that none of the responding boards indicated that they had received any complaints concerning the practicing of telephone counseling or web counseling, a possible indication of a lack of an overwhelming need at this point in time.

Of those boards with some regulations in place, one board, Arkansas, reported that telephone counseling is not allowed under any Arkansas state license. Telephone counseling has existed in some form or another as long as the telephone has existed. Crisis intervention hot lines have helped many a desperate client who, for whatever reason, preferred not to or could not meet with a counselor face-to-face.

One state board has taken a positive, proactive stance regarding web counseling. The Texas board says that telepractice may be used as part of the therapeutic counseling process.

Summary

The Florida Department of Health appears to be anxious to pass a telehealth bill that would impact all mental health counselors seeking to utilize telecommunications technology in their practice. The chair of the Florida board is observing that almost all professions have shown interest in practice over the Internet. More regulation will certainly increase the bureaucracy in that state.

The Florida bill, if and when passed, will require registration for any practitioner who does not have a Florida license and provides health care services through telecommunications to a person in Florida. This would include in-state practitioners not credentialed by the Florida board, credentialed out-of-state practitioners, and non-credentialed out-of-state practitioners. Out-of-state practitioners would include persons from the neighboring state of Georgia as well as the Russian state of Georgia! While cybercounseling may help investigators because of the cyber paper trail left by violators, enforcement across state and international lines will raise significant diplomacy and issues.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The statutes of most state counseling licensure boards make clear the expectation that licensed or certified professional counselors in their state must act, not only in accordance with the legal provisions of the state statutes, but also act ethically, in accordance with prevailing codes and standards. While few states make reference in law to the code of ethics of a specific organization, adherence to general codes of ethics as well as to the more precise web counseling codes of professional membership organizations like the American Counseling Association and the National Career Development Association and certifying bodies like the National Board for Certified Counselors is expected. Two exceptions are the California Professional Counselor Registry that uses the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for its standard and the Louisiana board that has adopted the ACA Code of Ethics and the WebCounseling guidelines from NBCC and ACA.

While ethical behavior is expected, an August 2000 survey of state counselor licensure board web pages uncovered the fact that few boards provide links to the codes that detail the parameters of such ethical behavior. That survey can be found on-line at the Cybercounseling website http://cybercounsel.uncg.edu where it appears in the presentations library as "State Counselor Licensure Board Web Pages: Meeting Consumer and Practitioner Needs" http://ericsys.uncg.edu/cyber/powerpoints/johnbloom/LicensureWebPage.PPt_files/frame.htm. A further concern is that little guidance is provided as to which sections of the general ethical codes have relevance to telephone or web counseling situations. Thus what follows is a listing of ACA and NBCC standards a web counselor should be following when a web counselor claims to be guided in his or her practice by "appropriate ACA or NBCC web counseling standards".

The American Counseling Association

The American Counseling Association's Ethical Standards for Internet On-Line Counseling http://www.counseling.org/gc/cybertx.htm (ACA, 1999) state that "these guidelines establish appropriate standards for the use of electronic communications over the Internet to provide on-line counseling services, and should be used only in conjunction with the latest ACA Code of Ethics & Standards of Practice (ACA, 1995)."

One on-line counseling standard often misunderstood, if not ignored, is in the section "Establishing the On-Line Counseling Relationship. d. Boundaries of Competence. Professional counselors provide on-line counseling services only in practice areas within their expertise and do not provide on-line counseling services to clients located in states in which professional counselors are not licensed." As California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Nevada and New York have no counselor licensure law, according to the ACA Code of Ethics, it is currently an ethical violation for counselors working in any of the fifty United States to provide on-line counseling services in these five states.

Excerpts from the latest ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice http://www.counseling.org/resources/codeofethics.htm that have particular relevance to the practice of on-line counseling follow:

Section A: The Counseling Relationship

A.3. Client Rights

a. Disclosure to Clients. When counseling is initiated, and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of services to be performed, and other pertinent information. ...
b. Freedom of Choice. Counselors offer clients the freedom to choose whether to enter into a counseling relationship and to determine which professional(s) will provide counseling. Restrictions that limit choices of clients are fully explained.

A.11. Termination and Referral

a. Abandonment Prohibited. Counselors do not abandon or neglect clients in counseling. Counselors assist in making appropriate arrangements for the continuation of treatment, when necessary, during interruptions such as vacations, and following termination.
b. Inability to Assist Clients. If counselors determine an inability to be of professional assistance to clients, they avoid entering or immediately terminate a counseling relationship. Counselors are knowledgeable about referral resources and suggest appropriate alternatives. If clients decline the suggested referral, counselors should discontinue the relationship.

A.12. Computer Technology

a. Use of Computers. When computer applications are used in counseling services, counselors ensure that (1) the client is intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable of using the computer application; (2) the computer application is appropriate for the needs of the client; (3) the client understands the purpose and operation of the computer applications; and (4) a follow-up of client use of a computer application is provided to correct possible misconceptions, discover appropriate use, and assess subsequent needs.
b. Explanation of Limitations. Counselors ensure that clients are provided information as part of the counseling relationships that adequately explains the limitations of computer technology.
c. Access to Computer Applications. Counselors provide for equal access to computer applications in counseling services.

Section B: Confidentiality

B.1. Right to Privacy

a. Respect for Privacy. Counselors respect their clients right to privacy and avoid illegal and unwarranted disclosures of confidential information.

b. Client Waiver. The right to privacy may be waived by the client or his or her legally recognized representative.
g. Explanation of Limitations. When counseling is initiated and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the limitations of confidentiality and identify foreseeable situations in which confidentiality must be breached.

B.4. Records
a. Requirement of Records. Counselors must maintain records necessary for rendering professional services to their clients and as required by laws, regulations, or agency or institution procedures.
b. Confidentiality of Records. Counselors are responsible for securing the safety and confidentiality of any counseling records they create, maintain, transfer, or destroy whether the records are written, taped, computerized, or stored in any other medium.
d. Disclosure or Transfer. Counselors obtain written permission from clients to disclose or transfer records to legitimate third parties unless exceptions to confidentiality exist as listed in Section B.1. Steps are taken to ensure that receivers of counseling records are sensitive to their confidential nature.

B.6. Consultation
a. Respect for Privacy. Information obtained in a consulting relationship is discussed for professional purposes only with persons clearly concerned with the case. Written and oral reports present data germane to the purposes of the consultation, and every effort is made to protect client identity and avoid undue invasion of privacy.
b. Cooperating Agencies. Before sharing information, counselors make efforts to ensure that there are defined policies in other agencies serving the counselor's clients that effectively protect the confidentiality of information.

Section C: Professional Responsibility

C.2. Professional Competence
a. Boundaries of Competence. Counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. Counselors will demonstrate a commitment to gain knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, and skills pertinent to working with a diverse client population.
b. New Specialty Areas of Practice. Counselors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervised experience. While developing skills in new specialty areas, counselors take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect others from possible harm.

National Board for Certified Counselors

The National Board for Certified Counselors' Standards for the Ethical Practice of WebCounseling http://www.nbcc.org/ethics/wcstandards.htm state that "in addition to following the NBCC Code of Ethics WebCounselors shall" follow the thirteen WebCounseling ethical standards (NBCC, 1997). The sections of the NBCC Code of Ethics http://www.nbcc.org/ethics/nbcc-code.htm relevant to WebCounseling are as follows (NBCC, 1997):

Section A. General

6. Certified counselors offer only professional services for which they are trained or have supervised experience. No diagnosis, assessment, or treatment should be performed without prior training or supervision. Certified counselors are responsible for correcting any misrepresentations of their qualifications by others.
7. Certified counselors recognize their limitations and provide services or use techniques for which they are qualified by training and/or supervision. Certified counselors recognize the need for and seek continuing education to assure competent services.

Section B: Counseling Relationship

5. Records of the counseling relationship, including interview notes, test data, correspondence, audio or visual tape recordings, electronic data storage, and other documents are to be considered professional information for use in counseling. Records should contain accurate factual data. The physical records are property of the certified counselors or their employers. The information contained in the records belongs to the client and therefore may not be released to others without the consent of the client or when the counselor has exhausted challenges to a court order. The certified counselors are responsible to insure that their employees handle confidential information appropriately. Confidentiality must be maintained during the storage and disposition of records. Records should be maintained for a period of at least five (5) years after the last counselor/client contact, including cases in which the client is deceased. All records must be released to the client upon request.
6. Certified counselors must ensure that data maintained in electronic storage are secure. By using the best computer security methods available, the data must be limited to information that is appropriate and necessary for the services being provided and accessible only to appropriate staff members involved in the provision of services. Certified counselors must also ensure that the electronically stored data are destroyed when the information is no longer of value in providing services or required as part of client's records.
8. When counseling is initiated, and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks and benefits of services to be performed, and clearly indicate limitations that may affect the relationship as well as any other pertinent information. ...
12. Counselors using electronic means in which counselor and client are not in immediate proximity must present clients with local sources of care before establishing a continued short or long-term relationship. Counselors who communicate with clients via Internet are governed by the NBCC standards for Web Counseling.
14. When electronic data and systems are used as a component of counseling services, certified counselors must ensure that the computer application, and any information it contains, is appropriate for the respective needs of clients and is non-discriminatory. Certified counselors must ensure that they themselves have acquired a facilitation level of knowledge with any system they use including hands-on application, and understanding of the uses of all aspects of the computer-based system. In selecting and/or maintaining computer-based systems that contain career information, counselors must ensure that the system provides current, accurate, and locally relevant information. Certified counselors must also ensure that clients are intellectually, emotionally, and physically compatible with computer applications and understand their purpose and operation. Client use of a computer application must be evaluated to correct possible problems and assess subsequent needs.
15. Certified counselors who develop self-help/stand-alone computer software for use by the general public, must first ensure that it is designed to function in a stand-alone manner that is appropriate and safe for all clients for which it is intended. A manual is required.

Section C. Measurement and Evaluation

12. Certified counselors must ensure that computer-generated test administration and scoring programs function properly thereby providing clients with accurate test results.
13. Certified counselors who develop computer-based test interpretations to support the assessment process must ensure that the validity of the interpretations is established prior to the commercial distribution of the computer application.

Conclusion

As state counselor licensure boards attempt to address their responsibilities both to the public and to the profession in a web counseling world, providing both potential clients and counselors with hard copy or hot links to sites which define ethical behavior can be a valuable service. It can also help prevent the inevitable – that day when clients and counselors alike, begin to consider taking legal or ethical action against unprofessional web counselors (Love, 2000).

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